Are you intrigued by the ancient Middle Eastern traditions about the Giants? Then this book is for you.

Giants are often portrayed in popular culture as monstrous beings, somewhat like the Giant Orcs or Uruk-hai in J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings. But what does ancient history really tells us about the Giants?

Dragon Seed tells the story of the formation and development of the western tradition about Giants from its origins in ancient Mesopotamia to its appearance in Canaanite, Greek, biblical and Jewish traditions. What sets Dragon Seed apart from other similar works is that it is the first study of its kind to focus solely on the early tradition and not on later sources written by authors far removed from those early days.

With his concise and to the point style, ancient Middle Eastern scholar and author of several seminal books and articles, Willem McLoud, guides the reader on an epic journey through history. In these pages you will discover:

- A continuous tradition about the Giants that spread from Sumer and Akkad to Canaan, the eastern Mediterranean Region and even Europe.
- The early conveyors of this tradition were the Hurrians, an ancient Mesopotamian people who were identified with the dragon-motif and the dragon seed.
- The prehistory of the biblical tradition about the Giants in Canaan placed in a broader context with new insights as to their origins.
- A newly introduced Hurrian-Pelasgian Hypothesis posits that some Hurrians later on migrated to the Greek world where they became known as the Pelasgians.
- New interpretations of historical events and peoples based on fresh insights especially derived from different versions of the dragon-slayer myth, contributing significantly to our knowledge of the ancient world.

This book presents a significant breakthrough in the understanding of the Giants of biblical and apocalyptic Jewish tradition.

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By Willem McLoud
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by

Willem McLoud

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PREFACE

The Giants are back! At least insofar as public fascination and conversations in the popular media go. Over the past few decades, an intense interest in especially the biblical tradition about the Giants, identified with the enigmatic Nephilim, has developed, with many books, video presentations on diverse platforms and discussion groups exploring the subject from different angles. In many of these writings, talks and posts, the popular image portrayed of the Giants is often that of monstrous beings, somewhat like the Giant Orcs or Uruk-hai in J. R. R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. The question is, however, what ancient history really tells us about the Giants.

Stories of the Giants in western tradition have a long history going back to Sumerian times when the well-known Gilgamesh was described as a Giant as well as the archetypal Nephilim. What is, however, not well known is the role the Hurrians played in spreading this tradition. They were not only the most significant conveyors of this tradition, a variety of motifs also allude to them having had certain gigantic heroes amongst themselves.

The Hurrians are one of the earliest known peoples to have lived in ancient Mesopotamia, together with the Sumerians and Akkadians. Later on, they also resided in Canaan, with them appearing in biblical tradition as the Horites (and Hivites?). Their story is a fascinating and intriguing one and of great importance for any true understanding of the traditions about Giants in Mesopotamian, Canaanite, Greek and biblical literature.

What forms a central theme throughout this work is the so-called dragon-slayer myth. This myth originated in the historical circumstances of the Akkadian Empire (c. 2370-2190 BC) and was later handed down all across the ancient world. Since its inception, the Hurrians stood central to that myth, with them having been identified with the dragon-motif, which later evolved into their self-identification as the dragon seed. The theme of the Giants enters from the start in both the literary and iconographic traditions, where it was closely intertwined with the dragon-motif. This prehistory places the biblical tradition about the Giants in Canaan in a broader context and provides important new insights as to their origins.

The tradition of Giants later on spread to the Mediterranean world. The Greeks attributed it to certain early peoples associated with the Minoan and Mycenaean civilisations, especially the Pelasgians. In Boeotia in Greece, these Giants were viewed as dragon seed, *draconteum genus*. Many of the names, themes, motifs and descriptions found in traditions about the Giants in second

millennium BC Canaan reappear in Greek tradition. This is the same tradition that was later on adapted by the Jewish author of the apocryphal *Book of Enoch* sometime towards the end of the fourth century BC and subsequently by others in later works. My work, however, compliments those books that focus on the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which came much later.

In this book I show that a continuous tradition about the Giants exists, a tradition that spread from Sumer and Akkad to Canaan and later on to the eastern Mediterranean Region and even further afield. I argue that the early conveyors of this tradition were the Hurrians, some of whom later on migrated to the Greek world where they became known as the Pelasgians. As a consequence my thesis is called the Hurrian-Pelasgian Hypothesis. The book recounts, explores and explains the western traditions about the Giants.

I have previously written a much more comprehensive trilogy about the extra-biblical traditions of the ancient demigods and even historical peoples and personages who believed themselves to have been descended from the gods or fallen angels.[1] It is an extensive theme, with different layers and diverse motifs from numerous spheres of ancient life, collected from ancient texts, iconography, cult practices and archaeology. What makes this study different is that its sole focus falls on the traditions about the Giants, especially their description as dragon seed. Starting from the late third millennium BC when our earliest texts become available and continuing through the second millennium BC to later periods, this book provides a comprehensive and overall picture of the long tradition about the Giants.

Dragon Seed does not provide a catalogue of the appearance of the theme of ancient Giants all across the ancient world. Instead, it follows a long and continuous tradition as it was handed down through the ages and brought from ancient Sumer and Akkad to Canaan and the Mediterranean Region eventually making its way into biblical tradition. It focuses on the EARLY tradition and not on what was written in later sources by authors far removed from those early days. As such, it provides an unequalled insight into the origins of the tradition, where it started in historical terms and how it was repackaged into legends and myth. It does not use late sources to speculate about early times. On the contrary, it gives access to an authentic tradition and provides a panoramic view of that ancient world.

In this book tradition is taken seriously.[2] It is carefully analysed, using the tools of modern science to gain a better understanding. And what is revealed

[1] *The Nephilim* trilogy

[2] As with my academic papers, I use an approach based on the work of the philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer.

is quite an unexpected picture of the ancient world, with new interpretations of historical events and peoples based on fresh insights especially derived from the different versions of the dragon-slayer myth. It contributes significantly to our knowledge of the ancient world. The storyline is kept concise and to the point and the book makes for a rather easy read.

My hope is and I trust that the reader will find it absolutely worthwhile reading.

Willem McLoud
September 2024

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